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New York

President:	Mr. García Margallo	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mr. Judeh
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Marican
	New Zealand	Mr. McCully
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Ms. Rodríguez Gómez

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, Ministers and other distinguished representatives here today. Their presence here is an affirmation of the importance of the subject under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, Guatemala, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Maldives, Morocco, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sweden, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Zimbabwe to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite His Excellency Mr. Riad Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations, to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

It is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; and Her Excellency Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations, to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has once again entered a dangerous phase. The eruption of violence gripping the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as Israel and Gaza, shows no signs of abating. Between 1 and 21 October, 47 Palestinians and 7 Israelis have been killed, and more than 5,000 Palestinians and about 70 Israelis have been injured. We condemn all attacks against Israelis and Palestinians alike in the strongest terms. The recent wave of knife attacks and shootings is particularly appalling. There can be no justification for such despicable acts.

As he reported to the Council yesterday, the Secretary-General travelled to Israel, Palestine and Jordan, where he met with senior Israeli and Palestinian officials and King Abdullah II. In all his exchanges, he condemned and conveyed alarm about the upsurge in attacks and violence over the past two weeks and offered his deep condolences to the people of Israel and Palestine. He also had moving meetings with victims and their families on both sides. The Secretary-General's visit had a clear goal — to support collective efforts to stop the violence, reduce the tensions and incitement and begin to outline a political horizon that can lead to lasting peace and security. President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu assured the Secretary-General that they are working to curb the violence, particularly through continued security coordination. Yet while they are important, security measures alone will not suffice.

Let us be clear. There is never any justification whatsoever for murder. That should not stop us from asking why the situation has deteriorated. I suggest that this crisis would not have erupted if the Palestinian people had any perception of hope of a viable Palestinian State, if they had an economy that provided jobs and opportunities, or if they had more control over their security and the legal and administrative processes that define their daily existence — in short, if they did not still live under a stifling and humiliating occupation that has lasted almost half a century. Instead, they see the growth of illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, which undermine the very possibility of a two-State solution and pose growing security risks to all. They see the emergence of a parallel de facto

settler community, with better infrastructure, services and security than in Palestinian-populated areas. With every passing day, their dream of real statehood is becoming more elusive. Nowhere is the frustration and anger at the current situation more evident than among young people.

The current situation also understandably sharpens a sense of fear among the Israeli population. Israeli civilians see the recurrence of violence as a serious threat to their personal security and that of their country. They are also alarmed about signs that anti-Semitism is on the rise globally. We must understand these Israeli concerns. Israelis see growing attempts in the international community at what they believe is aimed at delegitimizing the State of Israel. When confronted with a climate of terror, Israelis rightly expect their authorities to enforce security.

Taken together, the failed peace initiatives and the reluctance of leaders on both sides to take the bold steps necessary to make progress will create a highly combustible reality in which Israel's security concerns remain unmet and the Palestinian national struggle risks taking on an ever-more violent dimension — and this, in a region already plagued by violent religious extremism.

The Secretary-General condemned the setting ablaze of Joseph's Tomb last week in the West Bank by hundreds of Palestinians. This was a shocking act of violence with the potential to lead to reprisals affecting other holy sites. The sanctity of all holy sites must be respected, especially so as to deny extremist elements any opportunity to transform the current situation into a religious conflict.

Tensions at the holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem continue to be a dangerous driver of the current wave of violence. This year, during the holy month of Ramadan — the most quiet in 10 years, by the way — Jerusalem welcomed some 3 million visits by Muslim worshippers from the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. However, extremists on all sides have sought to disturb the historic status quo. Concerns among Muslims that this is under threat have been exacerbated by irresponsible incendiary statements. These have come from a number of sources and directions, reaching the point that many have become convinced that the Israeli Government plans to violate the historic status quo.

The Secretary-General welcomes Prime Minister Netanyahu's repeated assurances that Israel has no intention of changing the historic status quo at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. But that message will resonate only if swift action is taken on the ground that demonstrates this public commitment. In this regard, we welcome the Prime Minister's decision to ban ministers and Knesset members from visiting the Holy Sites. The Secretary-General encourages Israel and Jordan, in view of its special role as Custodian of the holy sites, to act jointly and coordinate the necessary steps. This would be in line with their previous understandings to ensure that the historic status quo is preserved.

The shocking murders of the Dawabsha family in July and the lack of progress in arresting the perpetrators were another critical trigger of the current escalation. This incident reflects an increasing sense of critical exposure among Palestinians in the face of settler violence and reinforces their feeling of injustice. It is imperative that Israel take action to empower Palestinian institutions to protect vulnerable communities. It must vigorously address the perceived impunity for settler violence by expediting investigations and prosecutions of the Dawabsha family's killers.

The third factor perpetuating the fragile situation is the level of force used by Israeli security forces in countering some of the violence. A number of incidents, many caught on video and widely disseminated, call into question the degree of response, including the apparent disproportionate use of lethal force as a first resort. The Secretary-General has reminded Israeli authorities that live fire should be used only as a last resort in situations of imminent threat of death or serious injury. It is their duty to ensure a prompt and independent investigation into incidents where use of force has resulted in death or injury, and to ensure accountability where there is evidence of wrongdoing. The Secretary-General is also concerned that Israeli authorities have resumed punitive demolitions, targeting the homes of perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks against Israeli civilians and security forces.

Incitement is another factor significantly fueling the situation. While leaders on both sides have tempered their rhetoric of late, misleading and inflammatory public statements continue to surface from all sides. The vitriolic nature of the public discourse is alarming. Every incident that takes place evokes impassioned narratives and counter-narratives that feed a vicious cycle of hatred and division.

Contrary to the shameful boasts by militant Palestinian groups, including members of Hamas, there is nothing "heroic" about the killing of an innocent man and the serious injury of his wife and 2-year-old child as they walked through Jerusalem's Old City; or the stabbing of a 65-year-old woman near a bus station in Tel Aviv; or the killing of an Israeli couple while driving with their four children. This is murder, full stop. Crimes like these risk perpetuating the current climate of fear and mistrust. We call on all stakeholders, including the Palestinian leadership, to unequivocally condemn the violence and stand up publicly to extremism and incitement. Failure to do so on the part of both sides leaves the door open for extremists to aggressively promote their destructive agendas.

The first priority for all of us must be the de-escalation of violence. Let me emphasize again, as the Secretary-General did yesterday, that the violence is rooted mainly in the absence of a genuine political narrative and horizon. Each month we have conveyed to the Council the reality on the ground that is the setting of this latest outbreak. Efforts from all quarters must be intensified to restore Palestinian and Israeli hope that peace is still possible. We must urgently achieve real progress towards a negotiated two-State solution.

To do so, we must see significant change of policies, consistent with prior agreements, that will strengthen the Palestinian institutions, economy and security. That would help create the conditions for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations. We need to hear Palestinian leaders address sincerely Israelis' legitimate security concerns and see them take steps to end incitement. To this end, the Middle East Quartet envoys must continue their outreach to regional and international partners to examine how they may contribute to a comprehensive resolution of the conflict. The envoys are planning visits to Israel and Palestine in the coming period.

In conclusion, Palestinians and Israelis deserve a future free from the fear of repeated new rounds of violence. Establishing the beginning of trust between the parties is key to overcoming the painful legacy of this conflict. The United Nations will continue to work at the side of Israelis, Palestinians and international partners to advance this crucial goal towards peace and reconciliation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Malki.

Mr. Malki (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by expressing Palestine's deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Spain for convening this debate, for the seriousness it has accorded to the critical matter before us, and for its able and responsible leadership of the Security Council this month.

I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing. We also express our appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General and his entire team for their efforts to contribute to a de-escalation of the current dangerous situation and to restore focus to the core issues and the imperative for a credible political horizon that will bring an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and denial of Palestinian rights — an unjust and grave situation that continues to threaten regional and international peace and security. Undoubtedly, the rapid escalation of violence on the ground is the direct result of the international community's failure to intervent and assume its responsibilities.

The hopes and national aspirations of the Palestinian people for a future of freedom, security and peace, free from occupation, colonialism, humiliation and injustice, are continuously under assault. The Palestinian people — in particular our children — are being targeted and killed by the Israeli occupation forces. They are denied their fundamental right to life because of their national and religious identity. Their legitimate rejection of illegitimate occupation is being met with killing and destruction.

As we meet today there is a grave escalation on the ground, in particular in occupied Al-Quds Al-Sharif, where incitement and provocation continues in Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, including attacks and incitement by Israeli extremists and officials against Palestinian civilians. We see this day after day. Occupying forces and extremist settlers and their militias have unleashed a wave of violence and hatred against Palestinian civilians, in particular young people.

Since the begging of this month, more than 50 Palestinians have been martyred, many killed by extrajudicial execution, including at least 10 children. More than 1,850 Palestinians have been injured, with Israel, the occupying Power, using live ammunition against unarmed children. Approximately 1,000 Palestinians have been detained by the Israeli occupying

forces, with homes demolished as part of collective punishment.

Open, racist and irresponsible calls by Israeli Ministers and senior officials concerning the need to use lethal force against Palestinians, in particular against children and young people, have served to entrench a culture of hatred and impunity. Israeli occupation forces, settlers and other Israelis know full well that they will not be brought to account for killing innocent, unarmed Palestinians.

Yet even in the face of grave threats to their human security, dignity and very existence, the Palestinian people remain determined to continue their just struggle for freedom. They are unrelenting in their demand for the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination in their independent, sovereign State, as all other free peoples around the world. That objective is recognized and supported unanimously in the international community.

For years — decades, in fact — we have come here to the Council to warn against the illegal actions and aggression by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people in the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. Despite the constant deterioration of the situation and repeated setbacks in the political process, we have maintained that the Security Council must uphold its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and that it must compel Israel to halt its violations. That is a fundamental requirement for progress in the peace process aimed at resolving the core issues and achieving a just, lasting solution based on international law.

Unfortunately, the Council has shown that it is not prepared to shoulder its responsibility to achieve peace and security. Repeated calls by the League of Arab States, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Member States concerned, including Council members, that the Council address the explosive situation on the ground and end Israel's impunity in order to open the path for peace have been to no avail. Instead, the Council has remained paralysed. That will be to the grave detriment of the Palestinian people, if not the entire region. This will exacerbate the crisis. Peace and security remain further distant with each passing day.

Our debate today must focus on the main source of the current violence and the root causes of every other round of violence, which is the continued Israeli foreign occupation of Palestine, its illegitimate war machine, its ongoing settlement activity, its blockade and its oppression that denies Palestinians every right enshrined in the Charter. We must also not underestimate the living conditions under a barbaric, military, racist occupation, which leads only to suffering, despair and anger. Nevertheless, President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian leadership have been firmly committed to peace. In return, Netanyahu shows only commitment to colonialism and settler colonialism.

The events we are witnessing today prove once more that achieving a just peace on the basis of the two-State solution, along the pre-1967 borders, requires urgent and effective intervention by the Security Council, not just fine words and statements. We would remind permanent and non-permanent States on the Council of their duty to promote the cause of peace and security in the world. All of us know what is required to put an end to this insufferable situation. We know the measures required. Rhetoric and temporary solutions are not enough. The Security Council must emphasize the world's unanimity that peace can be achieved only by ending Israeli occupation and the independence long-yearned for by the Palestinian people — independence in a State along the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. It also cannot be achieved without a just solution to the issue of Palestine refugees, in line with United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Permanent occupation, temporary solutions and merely managing the conflict will never lead to peace and security.

Moreover, the Security Council has a legal and moral responsibility to provide the defenceless Palestinian people with protection for as long as the occupation continues. And that includes the provisions in the report of the Secretary-General on the matter. There can be no justification for those who call for security for the occupying Power while at the same time they fail to call for or provide security for people under occupation: the Palestinian people.

Israel, the occupying Power, is not only in violation of its Fourth Geneva Convention obligations to ensure the safety and well-being of the civilians under its occupation; it is actually the source of their insecurity and suffering. In such a situation, in accordance with article 1 of the Convention and in line with the responsibility to protect, the international community must act to protect the civilian population from the occupation's aggression and war crimes.

Therefore, individually and collectively, States have a responsibility to uphold and maintain respect for international law — which places responsibility on third parties to assist, directly or indirectly, in whatever manner, to stop any illegal measures.

We urge all States to break any ties with Governments that cooperate with the Israeli occupation. Furthermore, there are measures that have led to a grave deterioration in the situation on the ground, including the burning of the Dawabshe family. We do not know about the fate of others. Have they been detained or not? Have they disappeared or not? We simply do not know.

There is an urgent need to label such groups — the settler terrorist groups operating outside the law — as terrorists. That has both legal and financial repercussions. We recall that the Israeli Government has continued to support, aid and give succour to such terrorist groups. They have protected and embraced them and, indeed, urged and incited such crimes. We must therefore work collectively to bring the perpetrators of those crimes and those who abet them to justice. There can be no real protection without accountability.

The Security Council must immediately address the grave situation in occupied East Al-Quds, including the Old City. Israel, the occupying Power, must abide by its obligations to maintain the historic status of Al-Quds, particularly in Al-Haram Al-Sharif, including the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. It is clear that Israel wishes to maintain the status quo of the occupation and not the status quo ante. That is unacceptable. It is unbearable, will only cause the situation to deteriorate and will have incalculable consequences. Preventing the Muslim faithful from entering Al-Aqsa is indeed a breach of the historic status quo. Setting time slots for Muslims to enter the Mosque, in the morning or in the afternoon, is a violation of the historic status quo. Setting a minimum age for entry is also a violation. For the Israeli military police to enter the mosque is a violation. To allow settler groups to enter every morning is a provocation and a violation. Prayer by such groups entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque is a violation of the historic status quo.

Those are some of the many measures that have been initiated and implemented by Israel. Israel states that it does not wish to change the status quo, but it has, indeed, already done so. The ongoing colonial occupation status quo is completely different from that which prevailed between 1967, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, until 2000, when Ariel Sharon visited the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It was after his visit that changes began to take place, one after the other. Now, Israel is making changes even as it claims that it does not wish to change the status quo. It has changed the status quo. We want Israel to explain to us what it means when it refers to the Al-Aqsa status quo. What does historic status quo ante mean? We call on States, in particular Jordan, which has a special interest in East Jerusalem, to look closely into the issue.

For months now, the Israeli Government has been fuelling the fires of religious racism and hatred by allowing provocations and entry into Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We have warned Israel and the international community that such acts, in addition to the punishment meted out against the Muslim and Palestinian Christian faithful, will, indeed, lead to religious strife. Such warnings, nonetheless, have led to no improvement. Israel continues to take the same measures. As I mentioned, this morning, such settler extremist groups were allowed to enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is protected by Israeli security forces, at a time when Muslims are not even allowed to be present — from 7.30 a.m. until 11 a.m. and from noon to 1.30 p.m. Muslim faithful are now banned from entering the Mosque at those times. They cannot enter the site; only Jews are allowed to enter during those two time slots.

The placing of cement barriers in East Jerusalem shows the ugly face of the occupation in that area. The Security Council can, in no way, justify the fact that it is standing on the sidelines, as we face this escalating struggle that is outside our control. It is resulting in religious strife, which is being fed by the current extremist Israeli Government and its Prime Minister. At any rate, no progress can be made towards peace on the basis of the two-State solution, while Israel is, illegally but effectively, changing the demographic facts on the ground in occupied Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, by entrenching its occupation.

We urge the Security Council once again to respond to the current crisis in order to save innocent lives and to allow for the possibility of a just and lasting peace. We also warn that concentrating on short-term formulas in an attempt to deal with the symptoms of the problem instead of its root cause will only cause the situation to escalate and worsen. We commend all efforts being made to refocus our energy on ending the conflict and finding a solution, particularly, those being made by France. We commend the wide-ranging calls made by the members of the Security Council for it to

take up its duties. We welcome and commend the clear declarations of support and participation in creating a credible, political horizon for peace and justice.

Palestine is prepared, as always, to cooperate and contribute to such efforts. Any attempt to abort such efforts will fail and can only take us further away from a just and lasting solution. On our side, we stress anew our firm commitment to pursuingh the peaceful, political, diplomatic and legal path towards the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to reach a just, comprehensive peace that achieves the legitimate, national aspirations of our people, namely, to live in security, peace and justice in our State, Palestine, with East Al-Quds as its capital. We support efforts to find a just solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (1948). The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, are not open to negotiation. They cannot in any way, shape or form be subject to the mere goodwill of the occupying Power. Furthermore, States cannot shirk their responsibility to protect under international law under the pretext of supporting dialogue between the parties.

The Security Council cannot, under any circumstances, set aside its mandate as the fundamental body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. I would like to call on members of the Security Council to visit the area as soon as possible, in order to underline their role and identify the steps that the Security Council should take in the coming months. The continuing Israeli military occupation is the source of the violence and of this historic injustice being perpetrated against the Palestinian people. The time has come for the international community to bring about the only way to achieve peace by putting an end to Israeli occupation and ushering in freedom and independence for Palestinians.

The struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom, justice and the right of return has been a permanent item on the agenda of the United Nations since its inception. It is the litmus test of the importance of the very principles that underpin the Organization and the entire international system. It is a test the international community cannot fail.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): As Israel's new ambassador to the United Nations, I have been charged with a sacred duty: to represent the people and the State of Israel before the nations of the world.

Like people everywhere, the people of Israel seek to live in peace and to see their children prosper. For the Jewish people, who have suffered centuries of exile and persecution, our dream can be summed up in the words of our national anthem: "To live as a free people in our land".

Tragically, since the establishment of the State of Israel, every Israeli in every generation has been touched by war and by terror. My own father, Joseph Danon, was severely wounded by terrorists while protecting the Jordan valley during his reserve duty. After sustaining critical head injuries and hearing loss, he eventually passed away after a long and painful struggle. This was a tragedy for me and for my family. I have experienced at first hand the price of war. We all hope and pray for peace with our neighbours, and we will do all that we can to achieve this noble goal, but we will never compromise the security of the Jewish State.

Today, I address this Chamber at a time of great difficulty and pain in my country and for my people. This is not how I envisioned my first address to the Security Council. Over the past six weeks, a savage tide of terror has swept over the streets of Israel, and yet, to my disappointment, all I hear are calls to end the cycle of violence. Let me make one thing clear — this is not a cycle of violence. These are simply unprovoked attacks against Israelis for no reason other than the fact that they are Jews living in their historic homeland. Like any country, Israel has the right and the obligation to defend its citizens, and this is exactly what we are doing. Any country — any country — whose people were being attacked in the streets on a daily basis would act in the exact same way.

Since Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, Israelis have endured a season of sorrow. Men, women and children have been maimed and killed on the streets of Israeli cities in broad daylight. Palestinian terrorists have chosen Israeli victims at random, using rifles and rocks, butcher's knives, screwdrivers and even two-ton vehicles to shed the blood of innocents. Israelis today know that an attack can come at any time, in any place, without warning and without mercy. From Haifa to Beersheva, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Israelis walking through their own neighbourhoods are constantly looking over their shoulder to see what

might come. People are afraid to stop for coffee on the way to work or even to take a public bus.

All of us here have families. Mothers and fathers worry that their children could be knifed to death when they leave the house, and children worry that their parents will not make it home. This is the true meaning of terror. When someone leaves home holding a kitchen knife with the intention of killing another person — any person — this stems from a deep hatred. When that someone is a 13-year-old boy who stabs an Israeli boy riding a bicycle 15 times — 15 times — this stems from a culture of hate. Nelson Mandela once said, "No one is born hating another person ... People must learn to hate".

Tragically, Palestinian children have been receiving lessons in hatred from their leaders, in their schools and on children's television programmes. A children's programme was aired on the Palestine Public Broadcasting Corporation media station called "Palestine This Morning", in which a young girl recited a poem calling for the killing of Jews. The poem called Jews "barbaric monkeys" and "the most evil among creations," and those who murdered "Allah's pious prophets". The young girl concluded, "I do not fear barbarity ... as long as I have my arm and my stones". This is Palestinian public television.

As we saw in this Chamber during last week's emergency meeting of the Security Council (S/PV.7536), many seem to be confused about the cause of the current escalation. The words of this young girl hold the answer. An entire generation of Palestinian youth is being brainwashed with bigotry, brought up to glorify violence, and raised to dehumanize Jews. This indoctrination poisons the minds of youth; evidence of this is only a Google search away. All we need to do is take a look at what is showing on Palestinian social media — vicious cartoons showing brutal killings of Israelis, instructional videos on how to commit a terror attack in the most efficient way, even an animated clip of the murder of Eitam and Na'ama Henkin — Israeli parents who were killed in front of their children.

Since most Council members have not seen this clip, let me tell them that a special effort was made to show the fear and terror in the eyes of the Henkin children who were sitting on the backseat of their car as they watched their parents being murdered. It is no wonder that, in the current wave of attacks, at least nine of the attackers have been Palestinians under the age of 18. When children are taught hostility and hatred instead of math and science, when teenagers are encouraged to grab a knife instead of a book, when young people are shown images of violence instead of a vision for peace, then they too are victims. When we ignore this deliberate corruption of the minds of children, we are not part of the solution — we are part of the problem.

The history of my region demonstrates that hatred starts with falsehood and incitement and ends with violence. The spree of stabbings, shootings and stonings we are now facing began with lies about the Temple Mount. President Abbas and the Palestinian leadership have repeatedly and systematically accused Israel of trying to change the status quo. This inflammatory allegation is false, and President Abbas knows it is false. Yet this deliberate and malicious lie is told over and over again. Not only is this conspiracy theory not true, but it is also not new. Allow me to quote the following:

> "We hereby announce ... that no one ... has any intention of infringing the rights of Muslims to the places that are holy to them ... Any attempt to describe the desire of the Jews to pray at this holy place ... as the creation of a strategic base for an attack on the mosques of the Muslims is nothing but the fruit of a fevered imagination or a malicious libel."

Do the words I have just read out sound familiar? The statement they come from was not issued last week. It was not even issued last year. It was made in 1928 by the National Committee of the Jews of the Land of Israel. Even then, 20 years before the establishment of the State of Israel, lies were spread about the Temple Mount in order to incite violence against Jews. In the violence that followed back then, 133 Jews were massacred and hundreds more were injured.

Today, when President Abbas declares, "Israel intends to make Al-Aqsa Jewish" and says, "We welcome every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem", he understands the consequences of his words. He knows full well that they will lead to new waves of violence and terror and that lives will be lost. Then as now, the story is the same — same plot, same characters, same ending. Actually, there is one major difference. In 1928, the convenient explanations that we now hear so often in this Chamber did not apply. There was no Israeli presence on the Temple Mount. In 1928, there were no settlements; there was no State of Israel; and there were no excuses to sell to the international community.

Whoever claims that Israeli actions and policies are the reason for the violence needs to learn a lesson from history.

The Palestinians are employing old tactics and are trying to score easy victories without having to negotiate. They are using the violence that they have incited and instigated in order to manipulate the international community. Instead of penalizing the Palestinians, the international community rewards them.

Israel is fully committed to the status quo. Under the agreement, Muslims are free to visit and pray at the compound at any time. Members of other religions, including Jews and Christians, may only visit, and may do so only on weekday mornings between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. Israel has not only accepted that arrangement; it is responsible for enforcing it. The facts speak for themselves. Let me share some statistics with the Council.

Every year, there are 3.5 million visits by Muslims, who come to pray in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and 80,000 non-Muslims visit the site, of whom only 12,000 are Jews. The status quo on the Temple Mount is the only guarantee of the freedom of religion in Jerusalem. We have said it before and we will say it again — Israel will not agree to an international presence on the Temple Mount. If the international community wishes to be constructive, it should focus on ending the incitement.

No nation represented in this Chamber would accept the presence of international forces on its sovereign territory. I would like to tell my colleague, the French representative, that we know that his country wants to see peace in our region. We too want peace, but the only way to achieve peace is through direct talks between the parties. That is the only way. It has proven so in the past, and it is the only way that should be promoted. The best way to reduce tensions in the region is to urge President Abbas to accept Prime Minister Netanyahu's call to meet with him, here at the United Nations, in Ramallah, in Jerusalem or anywhere else. It is the only way to promote peace.

Israel opposes any change in the status quo on the Temple Mount. The place where the status quo needs to change is here at the United Nations. If the United Nations is truly interested in calming tensions and bringing peace to the region, it must change its default settings. The United Nations must end its usual practice of calling on both sides to show restraint, and state clearly that there is one side that is instigating a wave of terror. It must stop making excuses for the Palestinians and start holding them accountable. It must demand that Abbas cease his incitement and insist that he return to the negotiating table. Only then, once the Palestinians see that promoting violence will get them nowhere, will the reality on the ground change and the prospects for peace return.

Please allow me to conclude with a quote from the Bible: "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (*The Holy Bible, Psalms, 29:11*).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain.

My remarks will be in the following order: a brief introduction, the peace process in the Middle East, Syria, Daesh, Libya and Yemen. To begin, I wish to make three points.

When I assumed the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain in late 2011, the Middle East was experiencing a period of unrest, yet there still were prospects for hope and a window of opportunity. In some cases, dramatic events had led to successful political processes, but in many others conflict intensified and new threats emerged, with tragic humanitarian consequences.

What we have learned since 2011 is that diplomacy and negotiation, when accompanied by determined goodwill and perseverance, are effective instruments for resolving conflict. One such example was the success of the nuclear negotiations with Iran. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet demonstrated once again the value of dialogue to the international community. The conclusion is that we must restore the spirit of cooperation and the will to build mutual understanding, if we wish to put an end to the major conflicts affecting the Middle East. That calls for concerted action on the part of the international community. To that end, as a priority measure, the Council must act in unison.

Allow me to make a few observations on the peace process in the Middle East, beginning with one in particular, namely, that the viability of the two-State solution is in serious jeopardy. In 2016, the coming year, 25 years will have passed since the historic Madrid Peace Conference, where, for the first time, Israelis

and Palestinians sat at the same table to negotiate. The Madrid Conference was a major turning point. We were no longer discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict, but rather a peace process in the Middle East with prospects and hope for making gradual progress towards the possibility of two States, Israel and Palestine, living in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Twenty-five years after the Madrid Conference — a full generation later — peace between Israelis and Palestinians is still far from settled, and the path outlined by the Madrid Conference and the Oslo accords is in danger of abandonment. We find ourselves facing an alarming outlook, including the exhaustion of the negotiation path, the progressive loss of confidence in the viability of the two-State solution and a worrisome upsurge of violence.

Let me be very clear on the following. there are only two solutions to the Middle East conflict: either a single, binational State, or two States coexisting in peace and security. I think that we all agree that the creation of a binational State is not a viable solution. We must therefore renew our support for and confidence in the two-State solution. We must do so decisively and swiftly, distinguishing what is urgent from what is important. What is urgent is to put an end to the tensions that are endangering the process. I have three observations to make in that regard.

Among the factors that triggered the recent escalation of violence and terrorism are troubling elements of a religious nature. Therefore I believe that the proposal of the French presidency, which is intended to guarantee the maintenance of the status quo of the Haram Al-Sharif and holy sites with the most scrupulous respect and tolerance for the different religious beliefs, is an initiative that we must all work on.

Secondly, to defuse the current conflict, we also need to facilitate an interreligious dialogue that condemns the use of violence in the name of religion. The situation cannont be allowed to become a war of religions. Spain, my country, offers to host that dialogue, which we believe to be absolutely essential and, I stress, extraordinarily urgent.

Thirdly, the settlement policy in the occupied territories is one of the major threats to the viability of the two States. In order to make progress towards the establishment of a Palestinian State — of which Gaza must necessarily be part — it is fundamental that there be unity between the Palestinian political forces on the basis of the principles of the Quartet.

Besides dealing with urgent and immediate matters, we must also deal with what is important. The persistence of the occupation, which leaves no horizon for a political solution, generates frustration among the Palestinian population. It perpetuates the risk of violence and does not contribute to Israel's security. The unsustainability and instability of the status quo become clear and demonstrate the cost of confining oneself to conflict management. We must aspire to solving the conflict, not managing it.

It urgent to restore hope to the Palestinian people for the realization of their legitimate aspirations to establish a State of their own. It is also urgent to help Israel coexist with its neighbours in the region in peace and with assurances of its security. To achieve those ends, we must not fall into either naïveté or fatalism. Peace is possible because peace is a commitment and a vision. The path has been drawn, but we lack the will, determination and political courage to walk its course.

We are pleased that both parties, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, have formally declared their willingness to negotiate, but that willingness must be translated into specific steps that can change the situation on the ground and generate the necessary confidence, which is a precondition to returning to the negotiation table. These steps include compliance with ongoing commitments in the framework of the Oslo Accords.

The major issue is what we should do to relaunch the peace process and reach a lasting solution. The aforementioned Madrid Conference was a success because it combined dialogue between the parties with a multilateral path, that is, with the support of an international architecture representing a consensus of the international community at the time. Among other things, it made it possible to launch the Barcelona process — today known as the Union for the Mediterranean — exactly 20 years ago.

That is why I believe that we need to redirect our efforts to setting up an international structure acceptable to the parties, one that could re-establish a political horizon for the definitive solution of the conflict. That architecture must involve the countries of the region and draw up a road map that would optimize

possibile incentives for peacebuilding, such as a review and update of the Arab Peace Initiative. We commend ongoing efforts to start a new political process, such as those being undertaken by Secretary of State Kerry at this very moment. The expanded Quartet, which met in New York this past September, should be a suitable forum for the search for a solution.

The Security Council must fully assume its responsibility in this context and promote measures that help re-establish calm and security. The Council should be able to pronounce itself and adopt a solid and legitimate political framework. Any framework agreed upon must include a tight timetable — I stress, tight — for negotiations, and parameters based on internationally accepted principles as a base for a solution to the conflict. We must go beyond a simple declaration of policy. I propose that our efforts culminate in a new international peace conference — a Madrid Two, an ambitious conference opening the path to peace and concord and facilitating the conclusion of a definitive accord between the parties that will put an end to so many decades of conflict.

Now I shall move to comments on Syria.

It is also urgent that we be much more ambitious and effective when we deal with the Syrian conflict. Here, the main victims are the civilian population. Our inability to reach an agreement to promote a political solution to the conflict in Syria is leading us to an accelerating series of initiatives that open scenarios of great uncertainty for the region and for the entire international community. The United Nations — particularly the Security Council — must play a key role in the solution to the conflict. It is Spain's opinion that we must continue working in accordance with the following parameters.

First, we must support the plan of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, which allows for partial and comprehensive ceasefires that in turn will make it possible to send humanitarian assistance to the Syrian population and stem the flow of refugees towards neighbouring countries and now also towards Europe.

Second is unity in the fight against Daesh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The international community must continue deepening this fight, in a coordinated and collective fashion, through a response that goes much farther than the military dimension. International cooperation in areas such as the fight agains the influx against foreign fighters, financial resources and dealing with the Daesh phenomenon in the media is particularly important when it comes to putting an end to the barbarity and terror of Daesh. Spain is fully commited and participates in that collective effort in its various facets.

Third is the humanitarian area. The Security Council must continue working on the different initiatives for protection and support for the population affected by the conflict. We are working with France and the United Kingdom to promote an initiative that will put an end to indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population by all parties to the conflict, including, in particular, the use of barrel bombs. It is also important to respond immediately to other humanitarian requirements, specifically respect for medical neutrality and humanitarian access to areas under siege. We are working on that with Jordan and New Zealand.

Fourth is the systematic involvement of the most heavily affected regional Powers, including Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Fifth is to start a process of transition to an inclusive Government with full executive powers, in which the Syrian population feels fully represented and with enough legitimacy to push for a political change in the country. We will need, first, to ensure the restoration of the rights and freedoms of the Syrians so as to create conditions that will make it possible, in a second, later phase, to move on to the political transition proper, with the legalization of political parties and the holding of free and fair elections.

Sixth, Syria will be whatever the Syrians decide it will be, but there are principles that cannot be renounced: the territorial integrity of the country, the secular nature of the future regime, and maintaining the structures of the present State so as to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Seventh, we must work to achieve the participation in the peace plan of the various parties to the conflict. Their commitment is needed to pave the way for a transition process in Syria.

On Lebanon, I wish to stress two ideas.

First, we must promote peace and stability in the Middle East region, which calls for support and solidarity for the countries that are suffering the most direct impact of regional conflicts and that with great generosity have welcomed the growing influx of

refugees, in particular Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt, among others.

Secondly, we are concerned at the situation in that country, because in order to address the various challenges facing the region and consolidate national coexistence, it is vital to overcome the current institutional paralysis. The international community's commitment to Lebanon is reflected in the support provided by the provisional presence of the United Nations, in which Spain participates as one of the major contributors, with 566 troops.

Let me conclude by touching on the situation in Yemen. The catastrophic humanitarian situation is aggravated by the repugnant activities of terrorist organizations in Yemen such as Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and Daesh, which make the most of the security vacuum created by the conflict. The international community, in particular regional actors and the parties themselves, must continue to work to relaunch the inter-Yemeni political dialogue, so as to achieve an inclusive and lasting solution that will guarantee the stability, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen.

In the quest for such a solution, the United Nations must continue playing a leadership role. Unity among all of us is indispensable in order to successfully respond to this crisis. It is our hope that in the days to come, the parties will initiate conversations in good faith so as to lay the foundation for the peaceful coexistence of all Yemenis in a post-conflict scenario. To that end, a genuine, renewed commitment on the part of the international community will be required to support the authorities, civil society and the people of Yemen as a whole in a process of political transition, institution-strengthening, stabilization and reconstruction.

Let me conclude by saying that in such situations, the Security Council must be able to shoulder its responsibilities and offer a way out that guarantees international peace and security, because what is at stake is the very credibility of the Council itself.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Judeh (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): This quarterly meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, is being held at a time when the entire Middle East region is grappling with increasing and unprecedented tensions, upheavals and challenges that seriously not only threaten international peace and security, but also regional peace and security. Convinced of that truth, this quarterly meeting is being held at the ministerial level, as the State members of the Security Council are aware of the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories at its core, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the occupied Al-Aqsa Mosque. They are convinced of the need to work immediately to curb its potentially dangerous consequences and to attempt to restore peace and stability throughout the region, so as to pave the way to a lasting solution to all of the challenges, threats and tensions in the Middle East.

The last two months witnessed another dangerous escalation by the Israeli occupying authorities in the occupied West Bank in general, including acts of aggression carried out by, or under the protection of, Israel against Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in particular. This represents a continuing and flagrant violation of a series of previous Security Council resolutions that considered, firmly and clearly, all the measures undertaken by the Israeli occupying authorities in occupied East Jerusalem in its entirety absolutely null and void, in conformity with the clear and decisive recognition of the Security Council that East Jerusalem in its entirety, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, is part of the territories that were militarily occupied by Israel in 1967, in accordance with the norms of international law and international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, this escalation and these Israeli acts of aggression, which are dangerous and have been condemned and rejected, in addition to the violations in Al-Haram Al-Sharif, have resulted in the deterioration of the situation, in a way that puts us on the verge of a devastating religious war. These acts fuel and provoke the sentiments of more than 1.5 billion Muslims throughout the world, all the more so because the occupied Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque are a place of worship for Muslims exclusively. In addition, these acts of aggression have a devastating impact on the opportunities to resume the negotiation process between Palestinians and Israel aimed at bringing about Israeli-Palestinian peace by means of a solution based on the peace process established

under international terms of reference, resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, with all its elements.

The position of my country, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, led by his Majesty King Abdullah II, is to carry out the two-State solution, put an end to the occupation, create the independant Palestinian State enjoying full sovereignty on its territories on the the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, find solutions to all the core questions — Al-Quds, refugees, security, borders, water — in keeping with the pillars I previously mentioned, and in such a way that safeguards and achieves the high interests of Jordan, which are related to all those issues, especially Al-Quds and the refugees. This is the only solution that will help us to avoid the dangers and violence that we see every day, such as what we are all talking about concerning the possible dictation of the one-State solution, which the President referred to in his statement.

Because of the recent violations in the occupied Palestinian territories committed by the Israeli occupation authorities, or under their protection and watch, in occupied East Jerusalem in general and the violations against Al-Haram Al-Sharif/the Al-Aqsa Mosque in particular, we have seen signals of a major and widespread escalation in the situation, which could spin out of the control of any party. Its impacts, especially in terms of the violence, the killings and the counter violence, could extend beyond the occupied Palestinian territories in a way that would threaten international peace and security.

I reiterate here Jordan's principled position condemning the targeting of civilians, regardless of its motives and reasons. The Israeli Government must renounce the tactics and arguments of its internal coalitions, which are no longer secret to anyone. The Government must adopt an approach to match its repeated claims of commitment to peace with actions and policies leading to peace, instead of pursuing its policy of divisiveness and the flagrant contradiction between what it says and what it does.

Peace will not be achieved if Israeli's unjust attacks on the Christian and Muslim holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem continue. Peace will not emerge from continued unilateral Israeli measures aimed at prejudging the results of the negotiations on essential issues, first and foremost of which is the Israeli settlements policy. We will come no closer to peace with the continuation and escalation of Israel's collective punishment against Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories and its continuation in imposing closures, blockade, the erecting of walls of separation, demolishing homes, killing of innocents, the seizure of land and other measures that violate international law, international human rights and international legitimacy. Peace will not be achieved if Israel remains wedded to those illusions and attempts to convince the world that undertaking symbolic and economic steps to improve the lives of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, even though those measures are important, will be an objective in themselves, not only a means on the road to put an end to the Israeli occupation and to establish an economy of an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State living in genuine peace and security side by side, and with, the States of the region and their peoples. Comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, in turn, will not be achieved without Israeli-Palestinian peace and a two-State solution. We will not be able to effectively and sustainably fight terrorism or extremism or triumph and see the values of the whole of humankind prevail without Israeli-Palestinian peace and Arab-Israeli peace.

Jordan remains committed, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, to achieving a permanent, fair and comprehensive peace on the basis of international law and the agreed terms of reference. That commitment is firm and an internationally recognized strategic choice. Our credibility within the framework of that commitment does not need to be proved. Our commitment, duty and responsibility with regard to the preservation and protection of Muslim and Christian holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, with Al-Haram Al-Sharif/ Al-Aqsa Mosque at its very heart, fall within the framework of the Hashemite protection of those holy sites. That protection is assured by His Majesty King Abdullah II, who is the guardian of those holy sites. His commitment is unequalled.

When we say that the Israeli occupation authorities continue and escalate their violations in the occupied East Jerusalem and against the Islamic and Christian holy sites, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, we are not exaggerating. Those ongoing, increasing and dangerous violations, which have worsened anew over the past two months and led to deterioration in the situation in the occupied Palestinian

territories and has brought it to the brink of exploding, violates the historic status quo of the Christian and Muslim holy sites.

The Israeli Government claims that it preserves it, as it is not in keeping with the Israeli commitments pursuant to article 9 of the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement. It also runs counter to the legal obligations of Israel as the occupying Power in keeping with the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law, which are strengthened by international resolutions adopted by United Nations entities. We in Jordan, as always, will deal with these Israeli acts of aggression, which are condemned and rejected. If they continue, they will undermine the peace process, its prospects and all of its achievements.

We have said it before and we will say it again: Jordan uses all diplomatic and legal options available to it to put an end to these brazen and irresponsible violations of international law. I note that the diplomatic options chosen by Jordan have in the past forced Israel at various periods and stages to adopt a number of temporary measures to calm the situation, and it did temporarily. However, later, Israel has always continued its attempts to modify the historical status quo in violation of all understandings and agreements, which were agreed by Israel. Jordan has therefore closely considered the legal options to address the Israeli violations, and will continue to proceed in that direction with the aim of putting an end to these violations, protect Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, and ensure that Israel respect its international legal commitments.

We also ask the Council to assume its responsibilities in this regard, because these violations committed by the Israeli occupation and the situation, which are universally condemned, represent a real threat to international peace and security. We must adopt protection measures to ensure that these condemned aggressions are monitored and that they do not recur once the historical status quo has been restored, as opposed to the new situation being created on a daily basis by the Israeli actions in the Islamic and Christian holy sites. We must restore and preserve that historical status quo, in both word and deed.

Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II, has undertaken a number of measures to protect the holy sites in Al-Quds. The King has a crucial role to play with regard to Al-Quds Al-Sharif and to the Islamic and Christian holy sites within the framework of the historic Hashemite protection of the holy sites, which must be strengthened and supported at the Arab-Islamic level through words, deeds and various measures. Israeli occupation aggression and schemes in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and against the holy sites, especially Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, cannot be successfully and comprehensively challenged except through collective, coordinated, comprehensive and harmonized Arab, Islamic and international efforts that effectively utilize the available measures to deter Israeli aggression against the holy sites. These measures should be strengthened, especially with respect to the historical Hashemite protection and the protection afforded by His Majesty the King to the holy sites. We need to promote the role and work of the Islamic waqfs, which are part and parcel the prerogative of the Waqf Ministry.

The topic of our meeting is "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". I would now like to touch upon Syria, where the situation is deteriorating.

We have all been witness to a number of alarming trends. The impact of the deteriorating situation has gone beyond Syria and its immediate neighbours to be felt internationally. I refer to the Syrian displaced and asylum-seekers, who no longer limit themselves to seeking refuge in neighbouring States. Jordan is among those States that have welcomed a growing number of Syrian refugees, who now number 1.5 million in Jordan, some of whom are officially registerted as refugees and some are not. That is a burden on our budget and costs us billions of dollars at a time when my country is facing huge economic challenges as a result, in great part, of the very difficult situation in the Middle East. We are sharing our very limited resources with our brothers and sisters and making our infrastructure available to them, on behalf of humankind as a whole, but our capacities are overstretched. The international community should help us in bearing this very heavy burden. Criminal gangs and terrorists continue to control vast stretches of territory in Syria, which of course constitutes a very significant threat to that brotherly country.

We in Jordan reiterate our firm belief, as we have over the past five years, that a comprehensive diplomatic solution is the only solution to this crisis. Such a political solution, based on the decisions of the Geneva I Conference on Syria and supported by the whole world, must be comprehensive. It must be inclusive and meets the aspirations of the Syrian people, the outcome

of agreement among all components of Syria, and lead to transition to a new political realitydesired by the Syrian people. It must enable us to put an end to terrorism, which is also an objective we all agree upon. It should restore stability and security throughout Syria, allowing for voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their cities, towns and villages. And it must preserve the territorial integrity of Syria and its political independence. We therefore renew our continued support to all efforts to open the door to a new comprehensive political solution.

I reiterate my country's support to efforts aimed at confronting and defeating terrorism in brotherly Iraq. I emphasize that our victory in that regard hinges quite organically on our efforts to combat and eliminate terrorism in Syria and requires a unified, comprehensive and coordinated approach from all us to fight terrorism in those two brotherly countries and the region as a whole. Terrorism is now a major and immediate threat and is no longer a challenge faced by any single country. It is a spreading scourge leading to violence, hatred, division and rejection of others. Today gangs of terrorists and criminals are spreading and extending in various forms and manifestations and have become a threat to international peace and security. Terrorism exploits and distorts the very noble Muslim religion to serve its own callous interests. As His Majesty King Abdullah has said,

> "The war against those terrorism gangs and mavericks of this era is above all that of Arabs and Muslims before any other, and we do wage it to defend our great religion, our noble civilization and to preserve peace and security in our States and for our peoples."

My country's position concerning the ongoing crises in Libya and the situation in brotherly Yemen and efforts to restore legality, of which we are part, is well known, and I will distribute it in the full text of my written statement. But I would just like to emphasize that the political process in Libya should continue. We urge all states and parties to abide by the results of the Skhirat agreement and the need for all to sign this agreement, which ensures stable peace for Libya. As far as Yemen is concerned, we endorse a political path that underscores the legality of the Government and presidency of that country.

Finally, I reiterate that the very dangerous and unprecedented situation in our region, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories, and the ongoing and escalating Israeli violations in East Jerusalem and its holy sites, require the Council to act and assume its responsibilities, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations, to manage and resolve the crisis and prevent further escalation.

Mr. McCully (New Zealand): It is with a sense of dismay that we address the Council today on the lack of progress in relations between Israel and Palestine and the violence that has raged there in the past few weeks. For the nine and a half months we have been non-permanent members of the Council, we have made clear New Zealand's view that concerted Council action is required to jump-start the direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians that are the only means by which a durable solution can be found.

Over recent months, we have been concerned to hear the ongoing repetition of a defeatist narrative that is in danger of becoming self-fulfilling: "The conditions are not right; the parties are not ready". But if the conditions are not right for direct talks, then surely it is the Council's role to try to create the right conditions. If the parties are not ready, then surely the Council should tell them to get ready, help them get ready and give them a time frame within which to be ready.

No one can excuse the violence that has taken place, but we should understand that it is at least in part a result of a failure of the diplomatic or political process. While those guilty of acts of violence must take responsibility for them and be held to account, the Council must take responsibility for the failure of the diplomatic and political process and move to resolve it.

We therefore welcome the opportunity for the Security Council to focus on this matter today, and hope that the Council can find a way to extend greater protection to those under threat of violence, and hope to those who currently have none. Ultimately, the Council will be judged not by the quality of the words that are spoken around this table, but by the quality of the actions that follow. What actions should the Council take in relation to the question of Palestine in the circumstances that confront us today?

First, we must clearly and unequivocally call for a cessation of the violence and for the leaders of all parties to use all of their authority to end it.

Secondly, we should restate the unambiguous commitment of the Council to a two-State solution as the only acceptable basis for sustainable peace.

Thirdly, we should be clear that a sustainable solution can be achieved only through direct talks between the parties, supported by key stakeholders, including the Council.

Fourthly, if the parties are not ready and the conditions not right for those direct talks today, then the Council should mandate a course of action allowing the parties to get ready and making the conditions right for those talks to commence within a realistic but early time frame.

My country strongly welcomes the very clear signal sent by the Secretary-General in undertaking his visit to the region this week. We believe that the Council must also send its own clear signal to the parties, to their neighbours and close friends and to the international community. This is a time to focus on what can be achieved, rather than to lament what cannot.

Since joining the Council, we have been clear that we will work cooperatively with other Council members to advance any constructive proposals in relation to the Middle East peace process. It has been six long years since the Council adopted a formal resolution on the matter. The events of recent weeks cry out for action. While we remain ready to support any other reasonable proposals for progress, we will, over the coming days, share with colleagues the text of a draft resolution giving effect to the four steps that I have just outlined. We do so in the hope that the draft resolution will at least stimulate a level of debate and engagement that will enable the Council to chart a way forward.

New Zealand is pleased to note the increasing level of activity by the Quartet. We are especially pleased to see the Quartet moving to engage the leadership of Arab nations through the so-called Quartet-plus format. We see that format as being the appropriate vehicle through which the Council can mandate the necessary actions and receive regular reports of progress. It may be that a parameters resolution will be required in the early part of next year.

We appreciate the fact that, over time, the Middle East peace process has absorbed the energy and attention of many good people. In particular, we admire the huge energy and commitment brought to the topic by United States Secretary of State John Kerry. We hope that the efforts of the Council will help create a space in which the diplomatic leadership of Secretary Kerry and others might succeed. If there is one lesson we can learn from previous attempts to resolve this seemingly intractable problem, it is that it will require the concerted support of the entire international community for diplomacy to find a solution. While no words from the Council will themselves bring about a solution to the Palestinian question, it is our duty today to find ways to stem the violence and then to find a framework that creates space for the diplomacy and political engagement that are so seriously overdue.

Ms. Rodríguez Gómez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to begin by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General for his presence today. We also commend the initiative of the Spanish presidency of the Security Council, because we know that the Middle East is passing through a very dangerous period, not only for the subregion but for humankind as a whole.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The situation in the Middle East, in particular in Palestine and its occupied territories, is a matter of deep concern for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The recent wave of violence that has lashed the occupied territories for the past 19 days has left more than 53 dead and thousands wounded. That cannot be interpreted in isolation. It is the result of the prolonged illegal occupation for almost 60 years that has denied the Palestinian people their human rights and the right to self-determination as a free and independent country. I especially welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine at this meeting. We also welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General during his recent visit to Palestine and Israel aimed at persuading the parties to put an end to violence in the occupied territories.

I will pause here to make a clarification. Language is important. If we look at the agenda item of today's meeting — "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" — what we face in Palestine is no longer a "question". We should be speaking of the tragedy of Palestine, because for seven decades the Palestinian people have faced terrorist assaults,

massacres and the complete denial of the human rights of men, women, children and the elderly.

A conflict, as we have indicated on other occasions in this Chamber, presupposes equality between the parties. But we cannot equate victims with those who victimize them. That is not correct. We need to clarify our language. However, we appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General. And we believe it is necessary, as has been said before, for the Security Council to visit the region so as to reaffirm the responsibilty of the Organization and promote of a political solution to the conflict, which has become a permanent act of aggression by the State of Israel against the people of Palestine and even, I dare say, against its own people. We are certain that the great majority of the Israeli people yearn for a permanent peace. My country is aghast at the historic level of violence and damage that Israel has caused the Palestinian people, who find themselves without due international protection. We echo the request by the Palestinian delegation for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility in this situation, all the more so now that the population of Israel has begun to take up arms to create paramilitary militias that will exacerbate the conflict.

Over the course of seven decades, the toll has been 42 massacres and hundreds of thousands of people killed. We must speak clearly and firmly on that point. Throughout the 70 years of the existence of the United Nations, the people of Palestine have faced a continuous state of complete lack of respect for their most fundamental rights. It is unfortunate that, ever since the Organization was established, no political solution to that bloody conflict has been found. That is a subject of frustration for the Organization, and no doubt for the international community as a whole. Israel's systematic policy of denying the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the existence of their own sovereign State has created the conditions under which extremism and violence win over the civilian population, especially young people. The deliberate intention of the State of Israel to impede the success of every attempt to negotiate a firm and lasting peace should capture the attention of the entire international community. The occupying Power generates brutal cycles of violence in order to justify its oppression and control of the territory in a permanent process of colonization. In just 10 years, from 2004 to 2014, Israel's military spending has been almost €110 billion. I do not know whether the representative of Israel, in the statement he made earlier, was referring to the amount spent to fight defenceless children. This photograph was taken just one day ago. Has the military spending been devoted to fighting those children? Or perhaps to flouting the rights of children, as members can see in this other image.

One year after the military aggression against Gaza, we must not forget the suffering of the victims of the ill-named Operation Protective Edge, which, according to information in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/677), led to the death of 551 children out of a total of 2,251 victims altogether. That paints a picture of war crimes committed by the occupying Power and demands international punishment for the perpetrators. That was one year ago. Those are only a few images, but we know that the international community was horrified, and there are even more tragic and dreadful images that, perhaps, we have not brought into this Chamber because the day is far from over.

In Gaza, the ongoing crisis is the worst of the past decade in humanitarian terms. Israel is hindering the work of reconstruction by obstructing imports of medicines and access to school supplies and sanitation and farming equipment. This initiative, which has depended on the support of the international community, has been cut short by the occupying Power's refusal to relax its control of access to Gaza. Israel's aim is perfectly clear. It wants to divide the Palestinians and render the existence of an independent State of Palestine impossible. I cannot fail to mention the situation in Palestine right now, in which more than 300 children have been detained, in contravention of international law and in violation of their human rights. Their status as minors has been ignored and they have been subjected to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment by the occupying Power. Where Palestinian children are concerned, Israeli jails bring us back to humankind's darkest times, in which torture and persecution have become the rule rather than the exception.

The acquiescent attitude that some States exhibit vis-à-vis the Palestinian question should draw the attention of the Council and the entire international community. Every effort to resume political talks is blocked by the hegemonic centre. It would appear that the only path for Israel is colonizing Palestinian territory and denying that nation its right to self-determination. The result, paradoxically, is that since the Quartet began using its good offices to get peace talks started, the Government of Israel has unleashed

a new wave of oppression and widespread violence that has blocked the path we need to a just and lasting peace.

We call on the Security Council to speak out immediately, demand that Israel end this new cycle of violence and put the Palestinian people under international protection, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Council's own resolution 904 (1994). Palestine's appeal for the protection of the lives of its citizens from the occupying Power's continued and systematic aggression must be heard. In this context, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela rejects the use of the veto, which only promotes terror through impunity. In the context of the Palestinian tragedy, it is a veto of shame. Venezuela reaffirms its full support for the right of the citizens of the State of Palestine to self-determination and to live within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

On 30 September, we witnessed the raising of the Palestinian flag as part of the Organization's seventieth anniversary celebrations, testifying to the commitment of the majority of the Members of the United Nations to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. This organ should therefore act in accordance with the decision and the voices of the majority of its members. It is high time that the State of Palestine became a full Member, and that the threat of a veto by one member of the Security Council cease being used as a weapon prolonging the suffering of the Palestinian people. It is a veto of shame that encourages terror and impunity.

We support every initiative aimed at achieving a lasting solution to this tragedy. It is vital that the Security Council act urgently to advance the negotiations, in view of the fact that the failure to resolve the issue is having a serious impact on peace and stability in the Middle East. We will give unreserved support to a resolution aimed at contributing to a definitive solution to this prolonged conflict that includes an immediate halt to Israel's occupation of the territory that historically belongs to the Palestinian people, as well as an end to its racially and religiously discriminatory policies and efforts to crush the people of Palestine.

I cannot conclude without expressing, on behalf of the President and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, our full support for the Russian Federation's action in Syria. We know that right now President Putin is giving the entire Western world a history lesson by fighting terrorism directly, without double standards or politically exploiting an issue as sensitive as that of terrorist violence, but which other Governments have used to ignore or strike down Governments that are not useful to their imperialist purposes.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over today's meeting, Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his thorough briefing and the Foreign Ministers present for joining us today.

Across Israel, Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, clouds of fear have settled in. In the context of the recent violence, one Israeli told a reporter, "I just don't feel safe any more .... I watch to see who the people are around me. I want to know who is behind me". A young Palestinian said, "[Y]ou are worried that someone will shout, 'This is an Arab, this is an Arab,' and someone will shoot without you doing anything." An Israeli tenth-grader said, "I'm petrified. Children are scared to leave the house. They won't go to the shop or walk around the neighbourhood". Across the city, a Palestinian father said, "I don't feel safe. The best strategy for me was to keep the children home from school". In Jerusalem, shoppers and merchants are on edge. An Israeli shopkeeper said that his customers came, bought and fled, and that people are afraid. Said an Arab shopkeeper in the Old City, "When I prepare the juice, I am scared to cut the oranges in case someone sees me with the knife and shoots me".

That mutual fear risks worsening the already dangerous cycle of violence. The United States is deeply concerned, and condemns in the strongest possible terms the terrorist attacks and the recent and ongoing violence. The human suffering inflicted by these acts has been grave and continues to deepen. We mourn the loss of all life and continue to stress how important it is that both parties condemn the violence and avoid provocative statements that could further inflame tensions. Both sides must exercise restraint.

There is growing frustration on all sides as the prospect of reaching a two-State solution appears to be diminishing. But that frustration is not a justification for reprehensible acts of violence against civilians. Stabbing innocent people as they go about their day is not an acceptable way of expressing anything. It is, as the Deputy Secretary-General just said, attempted murder, full stop. Such attacks must be unequivocally

condemned in Israel, as they would be in any of our countries. We support Israel's right to defend its citizens, and we mourn the senseless and deliberate taking of innocent lives. We have also expressed our deep concern about the deaths and injuries of Palestinians due to live fire from Israeli security forces, and we have urged Israel to take steps to prevent an escalation of the violence. As always, it is critical that every possible effort be made to guard against unnecessary loss of life, protect the innocent, reduce tensions and restore calm.

We have also raised our heightened concern about the increased Israeli settler violence against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank. Most immediately, we urge all sides to take affirmative steps to restore calm and reduce tensions. In that regard, we welcome Israel and Jordan's commitment to maintaining the status quo at the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, and we strongly support the efforts of all sides to ensure that this status quo is indeed maintained. Prime Minister Netanyahu has publicly committed to that point.

In the longer term, we remain concerned that the trends on the ground, including violence and settlement and outpost activity, are dangerously imperiling the viability of a two-State solution. As the Quartet statement of 30 September said, the United States and its partners support concrete steps to help stabilize the situation, show meaningful progress towards a two-State solution and restore hope. Together we must continue to press for meaningful steps that will lay the groundwork for achieving a negotiated two-State solution. Significant policy advances, particularly in Area C, will be critical to increasing the Palestinian Authority's ability to address key economic and institutional challenges. These can be pursued while respecting Israel's legitimate security needs. Indeed, they will enhance stability and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. We continue to believe that the best way to reduce tension is to work towards a political solution that will result in two States living side by side in peace and security. Only through a solution negotiated by the two sides will true peace and security be achieved.

Secretary Kerry had a constructive meeting earlier today with Prime Minister Netanyahu. They discussed the security situation in Israel, the West Bank and the region, as well as the situation on the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. A number of constructive proposals were suggested, including steps that Israel could take to reaffirm its continued commitment to maintaining the status quo on the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. Both agreed that there is a need to stop incitement, to reduce tension and to restore calm. The Secretary will discuss this further when the Quartet Ministers meet in Vienna tomorrow, and he will then travel to Jordan, where he will meet separately with President Abbas and King Abdullah on Saturday. In his meetings, the Secretary will be encouraging efforts to restore calm and bring an end to the violence.

We cannot discuss peace and security in the Middle East and not address the horrific situation in Syria, which has escalated dramatically since we gathered for our last quarterly open debate on the Middle East (see S/PV.7490). The repercussions of events there also reverberate well beyond the region. After four and a half years of war, Syrian civilians continue to endure barrel bombs, extremist violence and widespread deprivations. In September alone, the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that the Al-Assad regime dropped 1,715 barrel bombs on its own people, hitting mosques, hospitals, schools and other civilian infrastructure. The death toll over the course of the conflict has surpassed 250,000 people, and that figure does not include the tens of thousands of missing Syrians. In addition, more than 10 million Syrians are displaced.

The new Russian military offensive has worsened an already dire situation. Around Aleppo and Homs, Russian airstrikes are providing cover for an offensive by Al-Assad's forces, supplemented by Iranian and Hizbullah fighters. According to the United Nations, the new offensive has forced as many as 50,000 more Syrians from their homes in the south-western districts of Aleppo City, and another 35,000 from Hama. That is 85,000 people newly displaced in a relatively short period of time. Returning from southern Aleppo earlier this week, Dr. Zedoun Al-Zoabi, head of the Union of Syrian Medical Relief Organizations, said, "People are scared to death. Everyone is on the move".

Russia says that it is defending Syrians, but according to credible Syrian observer groups Russian strikes around Aleppo City have primarily struck critical civilian infrastructure, including schools and markets. At least 100 civilians have been killed by these strikes to date, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights. The Russian offensive has also been profoundly counterproductive, even in relation to its stated goals, as it concentrates its firepower not on the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), but on

groups that in many cases have taken huge casualties fighting ISIL.

Russia says that it is targeting terrorists, but Russia is in fact targeting groups and individuals opposed to Al-Assad's violent rule. Just yesterday, Reuter's reported a very credible study of Russian strikes, which showed that 80 per cent of the targets that Russia has hit are located outside of ISIL control. By attacking non-extremist groups, Russia has boosted, perversely, the relative strength of ISIL, which has taken advantage of this campaign by seizing new territory in Rural Aleppo. Since Russia began its strikes, the Syrian map has shifted in ISIL's favour. Civilians are on the move in terror, and ISIL is on the move gaining ground.

Let me be clear. Aiding and abetting Al-Assad's military as it targets the very groups that we need to bring to the negotiating table will only prolong the conflict and push a political solution further from reach. This conflict will not end until Syria is free of Al-Assad. Supporting him now only ensures that, by the time a political transition is negotiated, ISIL will only be stronger — its recruitment having been bolstered by the actions of Russia, Iran and the regime — and the Syrian State will only be weaker, the country more fragmented, and the heartbreak for families across the country more widespread.

Peace in Syria cannot be secured overnight, any more than the fear that clouds Jerusalem today will immediately dissipate. We hope that tomorrow's meeting between Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov will result in Russia's recommitting, in words and in action, to a political solution for Syria based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). At the same time, we call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to take every possible measure to reduce tension and restore calm on the ground. Throughout the region, a return to political dialogue represents the only real path through these darks days of terror and fear.

Mr. Marican (Malaysia): On behalf of my delegation, I thank you, Sir, for convening and chairing this meeting. Malaysia highly values your presence here today, which clearly demonstrates the importance that Spain places on the subject of today's open debate.

I wish to also warmly recognize the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, New Zealand, Venezuela and Palestine, and thank them for their presence here today.

I appreciate the in-depth briefing given by Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson.

We also associate ourselves with the statements to be delivered by the representatives of Iran and Kuwait on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively.

The untiring efforts of the Secretary-General in his recent visit to the Middle East region in a bid to steer the parties towards peace and to return to meaningful negotiations based on the two-State solution are highly appreciated, by Malaysia in particular. We strongly support the goal of the two-State solution. However, we are increasingly becoming sceptical that the best way to achieve that goal is only through direct bilateral negotiations between Palestine and Israel. Twenty years since Oslo, the possibility of achieving a two-State solution based on direct bilateral negotiations appears more remote than ever. The continuing expansion of illegal Israeli settlements and the construction of the illegal apartheid wall by Israel, as well as the increasing radicalism on both sides, have perhaps irreparably damaged any possibility of two States existing side by side in peace and security.

Let us recall the history. In 1947, the Trustee Power in the Middle East decided to refer the problematic Palestine Mandate to the United Nations after it had been severely tested and had grown weary of years of fighting a bloody guerrilla war with Jewish paramilitary organizations. These organizations perpetrated terror and violence by targeting British interests and even civilian infrastructure in their bid to achieve statehood. The unwillingness of both sides, the Palestinians and the Jews, to come to an agreement essentially forced the Trustee Power to resort to the United Nations. In response, the General Assembly subsequently decided to partition the disputed land, creating the State of Israel.

Now, over six decades later, in an ironic and tragic twist of logic, the international community declares that Palestinian statehood can be achieved only through direct bilateral negotiations with Israel, the occupying Power. Furthermore, there are some of us who do not want the Security Council, let alone the General Assembly, to play any substantial role in realizing the two-State solution. If we had applied the same standard to Israel and insisted for the past 70 years that it could come into being only via direct bilateral negotiations with its Arab neighbours, would the State of Israel

exist today? Yet today, Palestine's attempts to access the same legal, diplomatic and multilateral channels are derided as unilateral and counterproductive measures that would jeopardize the so-called peace process.

If the principal players are sincere about salvaging the two-State solution, there is a need to do away with old thinking and habits and to come up with bold action to achieve that end — because our past approaches have proved that we have miserably failed. For too long now, every time violence erupts in occupied Palestine, the approach by the international community, including the Security Council, is to scramble to shore up the ruins of the peace process. Then we dangle whatever we can muster in front of the Palestinians, as bait to pacify them so that their frustration and anger soon subside, in the false hope of a successful initiative. Once the situation in occupied Palestine returns to calm, the world will again forget about the plight of the Palestinians, who will continue to languish in inhumane conditions under occupation until they lose their patience once again and the next cycle of violence erupts.

Albert Einstein once said that insanity was doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. After two decades of failed attempts, let us stop fooling ourselves that this approach can still work. It is foolhardy to wait several more decades before we finally muster the political will and courage to do what is right and just for Palestine.

The majority of the Member States in this Chamber, including those around this table, have at one time or another fought for self-determination from colonial Powers. Based on our own historical experiences for self-determination, perhaps we should step back and try to understand the message that we have been sending to the Palestinians all this while. Effectively, what we have been saying to them is: "Obey the occupying or colonial Power, despite the grave injustice, discrimination, the lack of freedom and human rights violations done unto you; lay down your arms and do not fight the occupation, because doing so would amount to terrorism or anti-Semitism; do not proceed with any legal or diplomatic means for statehood, because it might anger the occupying Power into not granting you independence; wait patiently for your statehood, even though the occupying Power is changing the realities on the ground to make your statehood ultimately impossible; and, most of all, stay moderate and subservient at all times, despite losing your children and babies, your parents, your spouses and your siblings due to the illegal targeting or disproportionate use of force by the occupying Power, even if there is no accountability for the perpetrators". I really wonder how many of us in the Chamber and around this table, with our own history of legitimate struggle for self-determination, could pass the standards that we are currently insisting on for the Palestinians.

The continuing occupation of Palestine and the systematic oppression suffered by its people serve as a powerful unifying factor that has inflamed radicalism and extremism globally. We certainly do not condone the terrorism and violent extremism perpetrated by the likes of Daesh and Al-Qaida, which manipulate the plight and suffering of the Palestinians. But can we reasonably expect the long-suffering, oppressed, humiliated and subjugated Palestinians to remain passive when all legal, political and diplomatic means of resistance have been effectively blocked for decades? Even Malaysia — a non-Arab country in a region culturally and geographically removed from the Middle East, with a moderate majority-Muslim population — is not spared from increasing radicalism due to frustration and anger at the suffering of fellow Muslims in Palestine.

A whole generation of Palestinians has grown into adulthood since Oslo knowing only occupation, blockade, repression and violence. If the occupation continues, we will eventually reap what we sow, and one day we will wake up to realize that peace and the two-State solution are no longer within our reach. It is therefore in the international community's interests to act urgently to address the root causes of the conflict and to end Israeli occupation. I wish to echo the sentiments expressed by my colleagues around the table and by the Secretary-General on the need to re-establish a political horizon and to return to a meaningful peace process. In that regard, we strongly support and welcome all peaceful initiatives to resolve the long-standing conflict and revive the Middle East peace process, including the initiatives by France and New Zealand. Nevertheless, Malaysia would stress the need to set a reasonable time frame to achieve the two-State solution. The Council has various tools at its disposal for the maintenance of international peace and security that it could use to achieve that aim.

Malaysia firmly supports the request by Palestine for United Nations protection, including by deploying temporary international observers in occupied Palestine. We have numerous precedents for such United Nations

protection to guide us in our deliberations. I urge the Council to start serious discussions on the request for United Nations protection, in close cooperation with the Secretary-General. I strongly believe that United Nations protection would provide a way forward to stem the current debilitating violence, in line with international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions. That would ensure accountability for all parties to the conflict and enforce adherence to international law, international human rights law and the various General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, we are hopeful that the Council will agree an outcome for this open debate that would manifest our solidarity with regard to the gravity of the situation on the ground. Should the Council remain paralysed, rendering itself irrelevant as far as the Middle East peace process is concerned, we must be prepared to look beyond the Council for a solution. We must not give up all diplomatic efforts and let the occupation continue in perpetuity.

The international community must continue to uphold the legitimate right to self-determination, which has constituted one of the core principles of the United Nations since it was created 70 years ago. We owe it to the Palestinian people to mobilize our political will and explore the other peaceful, legal and diplomatic avenues available to us in order to end the longest occupation in modern history. With that I reiterate the position of my country that, if we do not act, there is no doubt that we will be condemned by history and we will face a bleaker future.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to start by expressing our thanks to Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East, and in particular on the Palestinian issue. Based on his briefing, we have to acknowledge the frustration resulting from the prevailing situation and the inability of the international community — in particular the Security Council — to provide a real, meaningful contribution towards a solution for this painful conflict in the Middle East and in Israel.

The current dangerous escalation of violence between Israelis and Palestinians and the tragic loss of life are indeed unacceptable. The recent events in Jerusalem, with escalating tensions around the holy sites in the city, are very dangerous developments with the potential for far-reaching consequences, which should by avoided by all means. We strongly urge the Israeli authorities and security forces to uphold the status quo in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound to avoid aggravating tensions and religious sensitivities and causing more resentment. It is always very difficult to put an end to religious wars. They are very costly in human lives.

Indeed, the participants in the debate have provided constructive contributions, which, if taken into account, could change the way we address this issue, in particular the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and statehood. In this regard, the Oslo Accords offered a unique opportunity and were a beacon of hope for putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Failure in moving this forward was catastrophic, and the restrictions under which the Palestinians live today are greater than those of 1987, when the first Intifada broke out.

We wonder whether the periodic waves of confrontation are not a deliberate long-term strategy by extremist circles in Israel to undermine the possibility of a two-State solution. On one hand, Palestinians face desperate living conditions and increased restrictions on freedom of movement in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. On the other hand, there is ongoing settlement expansion in the West Bank, in violation of international law but endorsed by Israel's authorities, under the protection of Israel's security forces. This reality cannot persist forever. As we have witnessed in the past forty years, it is usually followed by periodic waves of violence, as is currently observed in Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, these outbreaks of violence, beyond the horrendous consequences of loss of life and physical destruction, have always resulted in the additional loss of Palestinian land, increased restrictions and brutal repression against the Palestinians. The most worrisome development in the last few weeks is that both Israelis and Palestinians have abandoned the hope of negotiations for ending the crisis and bringing about a lasting solution to this conflict. The failure of the peace process — which, we have to acknowledge, is a collective failure of the international community — will weaken the mechanisms in place for managing tensions. Indeed, mechanisms like the agreement between Israeli Defense Forces and the security forces of the Palestinian authorities are less and less viable, since negotiations with Israel no longer offer any realistic prospects for ending the occupation itself. It is therefore the Security Council's duty to overcome our differences, forge a

consensus and do our utmost to revive the peace process by setting parameters for negotiations and for a final status agreement. This has been reiterated by several participants in the debate this morning.

It is imperative that the peace process be reinvigorated in order to end the occupation and achieve a just and lasting solution on the basis of two States, living side by side and in security. In this connection, Angola welcomes the visit of the Secretary-General to Palestine and to Israel. We also welcome the proposed plan for a meeting of the Quartet in Vienna tomorrow. In order to achieve some results, we urge all sides to put an end to the violence, as it undermines legitimate Palestinian aspirations for statehood and Israel's longing for security.

To prevent further territorial expansion and guarantee safety for both the Palestinian and Israeli people, Angola strongly supports the request for United Nations or other international protection for the occupied Palestinian territory, in the interest of preventing further escalation of hostilities. This would be a clear and tangible manifestation of our support for the two-State solution, which we have reiterated several times in this Council.

The atmosphere in the Middle East is reaching a boiling point, and we may be engulfed in a conflict that will have global repercussions. To avoid this, we must resolve the Palestinian question as soon as possible by facilitating the creation of a viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel. We need to go beyond the historic raising of the Palestinian flag, which we all witnessed here at United Nations in recent days. This was a significant political statement by the Palestinian Authority, but it is, unfortunately, too little too late, as the events we are now witnessing demonstrate.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): This debate is taking place at a time when any spark of unilateral action or any new incident can lead to an explosion of violence, shutting off the little that remains of the window of opportunity to reach a peaceful settlement to the conflict. Today, we are witnessing what actions — such as illegal settlements, evictions and demolitions, provocations, stabbings, acts of terror against civilians or a disproportionate response from security forces — can cause. In his briefing, earlier today, Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson noted the numbers of people killed and injured on both sides. These numbers continue to grow. Lithuania strongly condemns all acts of violence, which have resulted in injuries and loss of human life. The perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to account. Our deepest condolences to the families affected. We wish full recovery to those injured.

Palestinian and Israeli political, community and religious leaders must stand firm against terror, violence and incitement. They must clearly and firmly denounce all such acts and call for calm and respect for each other. Further inflammatory rhetoric, distortion of facts and violence — verbal or physical — will only bring more violence, pain, death and despair and will make the hope for living in peace and security even more remote.

All provocations, including at the holy sites, must cease immediately. All holy sites must be protected. The Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount is a sacred place for both Muslims and Jews, and it is vital to ensure that its status quo is respected. We welcome the repeated reassurances by Israel's Prime Minister regarding respect for the status quo of the holy sites and encourage further concrete steps to reaffirm it, working in close cooperation with Jordan.

Gaza needs urgent reconstruction and economic development. An immediate and unconditional lifting of the closure and a free flow of people and goods, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns, are required for effective humanitarian relief and recovery. We see Gaza as an integral part of the future State of Palestine and call for genuine Palestinian reconciliation.

The latest outbreak of violence reminds us once again that the current situation is unsustainable. The political establishments and people on both sides must finally understand that it is peace and not confrontation that is in the interest of both Israelis and Palestinians. This week, the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, in her meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, urged both sides to do everything within their power to curb the escalation of violence and restore calm. Lithuania calls on the political leadership of both sides to do everything they can to stop incitement, end impunity and guarantee respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. The political leaders have an obligation to protect innocent civilian lives. We call on both sides to engage in direct talks to calm the tensions.

The international community, including the Security Council, the United States, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the Quartet and regional actors, must play their role in supporting both parties in their efforts aimed at creating the conditions to make meaningful negotiations possible. We welcome the very timely visits to the region by the Secretary-General and by United States Secretary of State Kerry, as well as the meeting of the Quartet scheduled for tomorrow.

For the conflict to end, there is no other way but an immediate resumption of peace negotiations with a view to reaching a final political settlement — based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative — of two democratic and sovereign States living side by side within established borders, in peace, security and mutual recognition. A peaceful and just settlement of the conflict would have a stabilizing effect on the entire region. We call on all the relevant actors to take immediate, courageous and bold steps in that direction.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The situation at present in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has again spiked quite seriously. There is a need for immediate steps to de-escalate the situation, to attenuate the fervency of the rhetoric on both sides and to promote rejection of all forms of violence. We hope that this will be helped by renewed diplomatic efforts, including the Secretary-General's negotiations in the region and the imminent ministerial-level meeting of the Quartet in Vienna, which will be held on our initiative.

An exit from the current cycle of violence would be helped by a visit to Israel and Palestine by the special representatives of Quartet. The Russian initiative to organize a Security Council mission to the region remains relevant. The Security Council must more clearly focus on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. However, fundamental change will not occur unless, in parallel with efforts to overcome the present crisis, a renewal of political prospects for resolving final-status-related issues and for implementing the two-State concept based on a universally recognized international legal framework, namely, the Quartet road map, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, does not also take place.

The strategic task remains the same: resuming direct negotiations between Israel and Palestinians in order to address the gamut of final-status-related issues. We are convinced that only the creation of a Palestinian State living in peace side by side with Israel within internationally recognized borders can guarantee Israel's security and the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Progress towards that objective requires a rejection of settlement activities. The most important issue on the agenda is the problem of restoring Palestinian unity on the platform of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Neither violence nor terrorism stands to bring us any closer to a lasting settlement of the Palestinian issue on the aforementioned terms.

We believe that only through combined efforts of the international community will we be able to stabilize the situation in the countries of the Middle East. The situation requires prompt decisions. Chaos and anarchy, resulting to a large extent from foreign interference in regional affairs, is being actively exploited by terrorist organizations, first and foremost by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), whose evil plans are being implemented in Iraq and Syria, and are slowly coming to light in other countries, with the aim of creating a transborder Islamic caliphate. It is regrettable that this international army has been joined by fighters from many States around the world. The situation has simply become intolerable.

That is why, pursuant to a request by the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic for military assistance in its fight against ISIL and other terrorist groups active in Syrian territory, the Russian Federation initiated, on 30 September 2015, air and missile strikes on terrorist formations and facilities in the country. Collective approaches are needed to eliminate the terrorist threat on the basis of norms and principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

To solve this pressing issue, we should lay aside non-essential political differences. The Russian Federation has circulated a draft Security Council resolution whose main objective is to close our ranks and work to achieve the aforementioned objectives. We urge all to come and join constructive work on our proposal. The main thing in this regard is to review the near-sighted policy of rejecting a joint fight against terrorism as reflected, in particular, in a rejection of a joint determination of targets, including facilities whose destruction would weaken the military capacity of ISIL and other terrorist organizations.

I would remind the Council that the Russian initiative on Syria is two-pronged. It proposed closing our ranks for counter-terrorist purposes and, in parallel, the launching of a political process on the basis of Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). In that context, we back the efforts of Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura and urge the opposition to form a representative delegation to participate in thematic intra-Syria working groups.

A lasting settlement of the situation in Syria is the objective of our contacts forged at the very highest levels with representatives of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Jordan, Iran and other key players. The lack of alternatives to a political settlement was confirmed during the meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, on 20 October in Moscow. In that context, we continue to stress that Russia stands ready to make its contribution not only to fighting terrorism, but also to promoting the political process, so that Syria can become a country where security and stability and the peaceful coexistence of different religious groups prevails.

We attach great importance to the upcoming meeting in Vienna on 23 October of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the United States, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. We hope that this format will in the near future be joined by other States, in particular Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

We backed Special Envoy for Yemen Ahmed's efforts aimed at moving the situation into the political field and the launch of the intra-Yemeni dialogue for a lasting settlement. We call for an immediate end to violence, in the light of the tragic humanitarian situation in the country. It is our shared obligation to put an end to the long-standing suffering of the Yemeni people.

The well-known events of 2011 have led to the collapse and splintering of Libya and turned the country into another hotbed of tension in the Middle East and North Africa. The situation is being exploited by ISIL, which has announced its presence through horrific vandalism. The waves of instability are travelling southward through the Sahara and the Sahel, as well as northward across the Mediterranean and into Europe. The situation in Libya and other hotspots in the region have given rise to a migration crisis that is tragic in scale.

We urge all sides in Libya to act responsibly and form a Government of national unity and join together to fight terrorism. The Russian Federation, mindful of its historical links with the States of the Middle East, will continue to make a robust contribution to restoring stability, normal life and sustainable development to the region.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by conveying my gratitude to the Spanish presidency for having organized this public debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I would also like to thank Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General, for his briefing. I welcome the presence among us of Ministers for Foreign Affairs who have travelled so far specifically to participate in this meeting. My statement will focus only on the Palestinian question.

Today's debate is taking place at a moment when an upsurge of violence has raged across East Jerusalem and the West Bank as a result of the incursion by Israeli extremists on the esplanade of Al-Aqsa Mosque. The renewed deadly acts of violence serve as a pointed reminder that the status quo can no longer be sustained, with its litany of repression, deprivation and frustration that only further poisons the already explosive situation.

We would like to reiterate our strong condemnation of all forms of violence, regardless of the perpetrators, and to call upon all parties to exercise calm and restraint. In that respect, we welcome the recent visit to the region by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his commendable efforts to encourage the parties to ease tensions, thereby avoiding further deterioration of the situation. We hope that renewed diplomatic efforts, particularly the upcoming meeting of the Quartet, will help to douse the flames and lead to a resumption of dialogue.

It would be wrong of us to overlook the deep-rooted sense of frustration and the lost hopes of the young Palestinians who are expressing their anger in the face of the continuing, unending occupation of their country and in the absence of any political prospects that reflect their legitimate aspirations for a viable, independent State.

Among the main factors causing the deadlock in the political process and the fanning of the flames of tension and anger are the expanded settlement policy, the illegal expropriation of land, the demolition of housing and the building of housing units, arbitrary

administrative detention and indiscriminate repression, among other things. Added to that is the impunity enjoyed by the occupying Power, and the inability of the international community to accomplish anything. The indiscriminate repression of innocent civilians and the daily humiliation inflicted on the Palestinians only serve to add oil to the fire and further entrench the most radical positions.

In a region already torn by a number of crises and threatened by terrorism, it is in the interests of the entire international community, including Israel, to find a rapid and lasting solution to the Palestinian question. To that end, the international community must spare no effort in diffusing the violence under way and to give a glimmer of hope to the Palestinian people for a credible political process, with a deadline, that will make the two-State solution a tangible reality. In that respect, international public opinion, and the Palestinian people especially, hope to see the Security Council put less store by declarations of intention and focus more on concrete action aimed at protecting civilians and putting an end to the occupation.

The Palestinian people have waited for too long. Their suffering is enormous, as they await the resumption and hypothetical conclusion of the political process. Chad therefore wishes to express its full backing for the idea of placing the holy sites in Jerusalem and the Palestinian people under international protection.

The grave violations committed against innocent civilians must be subjected to an independent international inquiry, aimed at bringing the perpetrators to justice. To do so, the Security Council must immediately assume its full responsibility vis-à-vis all parties, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations and its own relevant resolutions on the Palestinian question, which have remained dead letters since their adoption. The already undermined credibility of the international community as a whole depends on that.

Despite failing to take on its responsibility to implement the two-State solution, the Security Council cannot continue to deny the Palestinian State the right to join the United Nations as a full-fledged Member, within its pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. There is no alternative to the two-State solution. I would like to refresh the Council's memory with the reminder that Israel was created through General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 29 November 1947.

By way of conclusion, I would like to pose the same question as that posed by the Minister of Malaysia: Why is it that what was possible for Israel back in 1947, is not possible for Palestine in 2015?

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): We want to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting, which provides ample opportunity to reflect on recent developments in the Middle East. We also want to acknowledge the presence of the Ministers and to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his profound and inspiring briefing. And we express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, not only for his personal involvement but especially for the moral voice that he has lent to the search for peace in the Middle East.

The surge in violence and senseless killings in the occupied Palestinian territory, so well articulated by speakers before me, is deeply troubling. What began as clashes around the holy sites has spilled over into multiple locations in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank. It is a clear manifestation of the extent of the escalation. Indeed, fears have been expressed that if the situation is not contained, the rise of a third intifada might not be far-fetched.

We condemn the indiscriminate killings in the strongest possible terms. They are unjustifiable, they are immoral and they are self-annihilating. Extremists on both sides must not be allowed to dictate the political agenda, as that will provide fuel for the conflict and further complicate the search for peace. Provocative actions and hostile rhetoric must be avoided, and political leaders on both sides must take the lead in ensuring that calm is restored. We believe that a crucial element of that is the maintenance of the status quo around the holy sites.

It must be stated that recent developments must not obscure the underlying problem in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As is widely acknowledged, the underlying difficulty is the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. We would like to see a genuine effort on the part of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to return to negotiations directly.

The current situation does not offer a sustainable solution to the question of Palestine. Indeed, it is creating despair among the people of Palestine and causing anxiety among the people of Israel.

It cannot be overemphasized that the two-State solution lies at the heart of the Middle East peace

process. Continued settlement activity by Israel greatly undermines that. It is evident that the two-State solution has the support of the international community. It is also widely acknowledged as the path to lasting peace between Israel and Palestine. We urge all concerned to demonstrate their commitment to the two-State solution by immediately ceasing the construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian Territory. We call on all States with influence over the contending parties to encourage them to reengage in dialogue on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the existing agreements between them. We reaffirm our unwavering support for a two-State solution with Israel and Palestine existing side by side in peace and security.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Spanish presidency of the Council for the organization of this ministerial meeting on the situation in the Middle East. I also wish to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing.

This meeting, following the public meeting last week (see S/PV.7536) and the Council's exchange yesterday with the Secretary-General directly from Amman, as well as the numerous diplomatic efforts that all of us have made, again demonstrate how serious the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories is and the extent to which our mobilization is necessary.

We face an especially alarming escalation of violence in the Middle East, which sadly has been growing worse on the ground. France, I wish to emphasize, strongly condemned the violence of the recent weeks, whoever the perpetrators. The toll in terms of victims, wounded, suffering and frustration is especially heavy. That deadly spiral is the concrete result of an impasse in the peace process, especially from the threat posed by the continued settlement policy, which is illegal under international law, impacts on the viability of a two-State solution and fuels both despair and violence. It constitutes an obstacle to the aspirations of both parties, namely, the creation of a Palestinian State and the right of Israel to live in security.

While some have urged us to postpone the issue when faced with an international agenda replete with other crises, we have been working tirelessly in recent months to propose solutions to break the vicious cycle of violence in the Middle East. The current situation highlights the validity and need for such proposals as well as the need to stay the course. The time is not right to fold our arms. We need to assume our collective responsibility, and France, as a permanent member of the Security Council and a friend of both the Israeli and Palestinian people, intends to assume its responsibilities. In that spirit, we have insisted for a long time on the need for a collective mobilization to find a lasting political solution to the conflict. Despite the proliferation of crises in the region, we have remained true to the conviction that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must remain an international priority. Not only are the parameters of a solution to the conflict well known, but moreover, the lack of a settlement remains a powerful recruitment argument for terrorism in the region and remains a factor in the destabilization of the region. We cannot run the risk of Daesh seizing the Palestinian issue, with all of its unimaginable consequences.

It is the responsibility of the international community and the Security Council to find a response to the conflict. As a priority, we strongly urge the parties to redouble their efforts to promote a calming of the situation by refraining from any acts or words that could stoke the violence. Maintaining the 1967 status quo for the holy sites in Jerusalem is an imperative, as underscored yesterday by the Secretary-General. France would like the Security Council to make its voice heard — its unanimous voice heard — to preserve the status quo and restore calm. Again, that is our responsibility.

At the same time, we must rededicate ourselves towards allowing a political solution to emerge on the horizon. We must work together to support the resumption of a credible political process to serve a two-State solution. That is the thrust of our initiative, alongside that of the Quartet, for renewed international support for the peace process. That drive is aimed at fully involving Arab and European partners to support a settlement of the conflict. We intend to continue on that path. The absence of any political prospect serves no one. The two-State solution can be the only response to the conflict. France remains mobilized and prepared to work to that end with its partners and to support the actions of the United Nations.

Allow me to say a few words on Syria. On 17 August, the adoption of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/15) represented, after four years of

deadlock, a glimmer of hope for the emergence of a settlement of the Syrian crisis. We thought that the Security Council was finally ready to tackle the root causes of the evils ravaging that country and to advance three main, among several, priorities, namely, to fight more effectively against terrorism and against Daesh in particular. It is Daesh we need to strike, not the moderate opposition. We need to implement a real political transition, and we need to bring a response to the horrors experienced by the Syrian civilian population.

The past few weeks — this is an understatement — have not given us concrete hope and have instead given us new reasons for concern. France and its partners have repeated untiringly that backing Mr. Bashar Al-Assad to combat the terrorists is a false solution, which will do nothing more than strengthen Daesh and prolong the tragedy. That equation will never work because it precludes Syrians from coming together against terrorism. It fuels Daesh propaganda and will ultimately increase its attractiveness. That would be not simply a moral error, but it would be a strategic error, for which the Syrian people, the entire Middle East and beyond will have to pay the price. The fate of the Syrian people cannot be limited to an alternative to terror or a dictatorship based on bloody repression or barbarous terrorism.

The root causes of the Syrian tragedy must be tackled at its source, which requires a political transition that can lead to national reconciliation. What we should seek is already included in the June 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex): a Government enjoying full executive authority and which brings together both the elements of the regime and the elements of the opposition who reject terrorism. We know what the main parameters and objectives are as well as who the main players of such a transition are. We should not resign ourselves to the current impasse. Rather, we should continue to back the efforts of the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to engage in discussions and negotiations with all parties and to determine the outline for an orderly solution.

With more than 250,000 dead and more than 10 million displaced persons and refugees, Syria is the stage of the worst human tragedy of the early twenty-first century. Against the backgdrop of that chaotic situation, the immediate responsibility of the Council should be to effectively protect the civilian population. It is the Syrian authorities who have the responsibility to protect their population. However, the regime, now heavily supported from the outside, is using its military resources, including air assets, to terrorize and kill civilians, in continued violation of its obligations under international law and Security Council resolutions.

Entire areas in Syria are currently under indiscriminate fire, including by the use of barrel bombs. Everyone knows the horrible nature of those actions, which strike indiscriminately and which, to quote Mr. Staffan de Mistura, bear the sinister "hallmark" of the Bashar Al-Assad regime. Barrel bombs are not defensive weapons. They are weapons of terror, weapons that fuel the displacement of individuals and, ultimately, the flows of refugees towards neighbouring countries and towards Europe. It is the immediate responsibility of the members of the Security Council to take steps to effectively halt the use of such ghastly weapons in Syria. France, along with Spain and the United Kingdom, will soon make concrete proposals to its partners to achieve that objective.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile reiterates its deep concern at the new cycle of violence that has been unleasehd in Palestine and Israel and East Jerusalem. We especially condemn the intentional burning of the Tomb of the Patriarch Joseph as well as the bombing of the Beersheba Central Bus Station. Those events are turning point in the resurgence of the crisis.

We understand the fear that has gripped much of the Israeli public. But the peace and stability to which they aspire will not be achieved through the securitization of the problem. The solution cannot lie in stronger security measures, home demolitions or punitive measures that violate minimum standards of procedure and the right to fair and dignified treatment.

We are concerned that some Palestinian young people, owing to the frustration and lack of opportunities resulting from the occupation, are taking the path of violence to make their demands heard. At this critical point, it is imperative to address the root causes of conflict. The political horizon leading to a two-State solution must be restored; this is a realistic alternative that would allow both peoples to coexist peacefully. The parties must commit themselves to that solution in word and in deed, freezing the construction of and dismantling settlements, as well as putting an end to and rejecting any inflammatory rhetoric. In particular,

we call upon the leaders of both peoples to prevent extremist positions from hijacking the political agenda.

The current spiral of violence should lead the members of the Council to relaunch the process of dialogue. To that end, it is vital to create conditions that promote trust between the parties. Any effort in the quest for areas of convergence must include the aspiration of Palestine to exercise its right to self-determination, as well as the due security safeguards required by Israel. We believe that faithful compliance with the agreements reached and established practices regarding the use of and visits to the Temple Mount are key to reducing current tensions.

Finally, we take note of the letter sent yesterday by the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council with regard to the request made by President Abbas for the establishment of an international protection system, transmitting a report setting out a historical review of precedents in the area of protection.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I welcome the briefing from the Deputy Secretary-General, and I welcome the Secretary-General's ongoing visit to the region.

"We are all human beings; we are all equal". Those are the words of Uri Rezken, an Israeli man who was stabbed last week. Yuri was attacked in a supermarket while working side by side with an Arab colleague. His assailant was an Israeli, but, as Uri said afterwards, "It does not matter if an Arab stabbed me or a Jew stabbed me — a religious, Orthodox or secular person. I have no words to describe this hate crime".

Uri is just one victim of the continuing violence and terrorist attacks across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. To his story we can add countless others, from Palestinians, from Israelis and now from an Eritrean man, Haptom Zerhom, who, like Uri, was a victim of mistaken identity. Like Haptom, too many of these victims are now unable to tell their own story.

All of us in the Council understand the frustration at the lack of progress towards peace. But we must send a clear and unwavering message today that neither frustration nor anything else can possibly justify these attacks. There are no words to describe these hate crimes.

The British Government strongly condemns all acts of violence and incitement, no matter who committed them. We are clear that the parties need to agree on the status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, Temple Mount, and commit to it. They need to tackle incitement, which fuels violence and hostility. Both sides need to do all they can to end the violence. If it does not stop, it will only drag the parties further away from the solution that we all want.

The Council must also play its role in de-escalating the situation and in driving forward political progress towards a lasting solution. This means increasing efforts to find practical improvements on the ground. This is vital if we are to preserve the viability of the two-State solution.

Without progress in three areas, I fear that we will see only more violence. First, Gazans must be able to secure jobs and build their livelihoods. This means the free movement of people and goods; it means immediate practical measures from Israel to develop water and energy infrastructure; and it means Palestinian factions pushing forward with reconciliation and making the reconstruction of Gaza a priority.

Secondly, progress is desperately needed, too, in the West Bank. The transfer of authority over Area C to the Palestinian authority, as the Oslo Accords set out, is critical to successful two-State solution. It could unlock huge economic benefits. Immediate progress towards this would not only improve the lives of thousands of Palestinians, it would also help restore much-needed faith in the peace process.

Thirdly, as my Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary made clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu last month, the expansion of settlements and the demolition of Palestinian homes must stop. They are illegal under international law; they erode faith in the two-State solution; and they erode the physical viability of the Palestinian State.

We remain convinced that a negotiated two-State solution is the only way to resolve the conflict. It is the only way to see a safe and secure Israel coexist alongside a viable, sovereign Palestinian State. The United Kingdom will continue to work towards this urgent priority in the Council and elsewhere.

A long-term political settlement, one that ensures a safe future for all, is exactly what we want elsewhere across the Middle East. In the interests of time, I will not discuss today Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen or Libya; instead, I will focus on Syria, where, tragically, the prospects are deteriorating. The number of refugees

has increased to 4 million, and tens of thousands are crossing into Europe to avoid barrel bombs and other violations of human rights. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and terrorist groups continue to pose a threat both in the region and beyond.

To have a long-term response to the migration crisis and to the threat from ISIL, we must tackle the root cause. Make no mistake: the root cause in Syria is the brutality of the Al-Assad regime. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians with barrel bombs and the use of chemical weapons have caused 12 million Syrians to flee their homes and have left a quarter of a million dead. So the United Kingdom, with France and Spain, will circulate shortly concrete proposals designed to bring to an end the indiscriminate use of barrel bombs.

The Council has always been united on the need to find a political solution in Syria. Together we supported the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and voted in favour of its principles. But now Russian military intervention on the side of Al-Assad is assisting the targeting of moderate armed groups. Such actions only diminish the prospects of a political process. Some of the groups targeted are the very ones that Staffan de Mistura had invited to join his talks. Russia has undermined the constructive relationship that we built in the Council when we came together to make some progress on chemical weapons and humanitarian issues.

Russia's decision to target moderate armed groups will only prop up Al-Assad and undermine peace, for Al-Assad's brutality remains ISIL's greatest recruiting sergeant. Al-Assad has shown that he cannot be a partner against ISIL. And in deciding to take part in Syria's civil war, Russia will now have to defend its actions to the Council and, indeed, to Sunni communities across the world, and it must use his influence to get the regime to stop its worst excesses and acts of brutality.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Spain for its initiative to hold this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, and we welcome the presence of Foreign Minister José Manuel García Margallo here in New York to preside over this meeting. I listened carefully to the briefing given by Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson.

On 24 October, the United Nations will celebrate the seventieth anniversary of its founding. Regrettably, however, no hope has been seen for a solution to the Palestinian issue, which is at the core of the issues of the Middle East and has persisted since the founding of the Organization. The Palestinian-Israeli security situation continues to deteriorate, with frequent bloody incidents resulting in increasing civilian casualties and threatening to further escalate and spread the conflict. This situation is not acceptable. The international community should take prompt action to alleviate the situation. In that respect, China would like to emphasize the following five points.

First, the international community should urge Palestine and Israel to exercise restraint, keep calm and put an end to all rhetoric and actions not conducive to easing the tense situation so as to avoid further escalation of the conflict. China highly appreciates the current good offices of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the Middle East and welcomes the promise made by the Palestinian side to investigate crimes committed during the clashes. It hopes that this will help reduce violence and conflict. We urge Israel to avoid excessive use of force and honour its commitment to maintain the status quo of the holy sites and put an end to its violations of the rights of the Palestinian people to create the basic conditions for the two sides to sit down to seek a solution to the issue.

Secondly, the establishment of an independent Palestine and a situation in which the two countries of Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace is the correct way out of the impasse, and peace talks are the only feasible and practical means towards that end. The leaders of Palestine and Israel should put the fundamental interests of their peoples and the overall goal of maintaining regional peace and stability above all else and make political decisions to push for the gradual settlement of the issue. Israel should take the lead to show good will in taking actions favourable for the resumption of negotiations. The reasonable security concerns of the countries in the region should also be addressed.

Thirdly, the Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It should therefore actively respond to the reasonable requests of Palestine and the Arab countries by taking the actions necessary to put an end to the clashes between the parties and resuming the peace talks.

China welcomes the case studies initiated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, at the request of Palestine, and his report (S/2015/677) to the Security Council with regard to international protection by the

United Nations for the Palestinian people, and hopes that the Security Council will carefully consider it.

Fourthly, the settlement of the Palestinian issue requires the collective efforts of both Palestine and Israel, as well as the international community. China hopes the potential of the existing mechanisms of the Middle East peace process can be further tapped with strengthened communication and synergy among the Quartet, the countries of the region and major international partners so as to strengthen the momentum for the resumption of peace talks between Palestine and Israel and to find together an effective remedy for the current Palestinian-Israeli situation.

Fifthly, efforts should be made to improve the humanitarian situation in Palestine. Currently the rebuilding of Gaza faces many difficulties. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in the face of multiple challenges, such as the blockade by Israel, the unstable Palestinian-Israeli situation and the serious shortage of resources. China urges Israel to cooperate with international relief efforts and completely lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip. We hope the international community and donors will honour their assistance commitments as soon as possible to increase the support to Gaza in order to improve the humanitarian situation there.

China has always supported the just cause of the Palestinian people for the restoration of their legitimate national rights and has always promoted peace and facilitated negotiations. In 2013, President Xi Jinping put forward a four-point proposal for settling the question of Palestine. It emphasized that peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel is the right direction to take to settle the issue between the countries with the establishment of an independent Palestine.

Peace talks represent the only realistic path towards reconciliation between Israel and Palestine. Principles such as land for peace provide an important basis for promoting the Middle East peace process, and international support constitutes a necessary guarantee of progress in the peace talks. China will maintain communications and coordination with all parties concerned in an unremitting effort to push for the easing of the Palestinian-Israeli situation and the resumption of peace talks.

In the 70 years of the history of the United Nations, we have witnessed many wars in the Middle East and the displacement of innocent civilians. The combination of national disputes and religious and ethnic conflicts have resulted in conflicts and wars, humanitarian disasters, migrant crises and the threat of terrorism. The history of the Middle East has repeatedly demonstrated that no use of force can settle such issues definitively. Hatred will only dash the hopes for peace. In today's world, no country can enjoy absolute security for itself on its own or find stability in the instability of others.

President Xi Jinping of China, during his participation in the general debate (see A/70/PV.13) in September, fully elaborated on the idea of building a new type of international relations based on win-win cooperation, with an emphasis on building partnerships in which countries treat each other as equals and engage in consultations with a mutual understanding to create a security architecture featuring fairness, justice and joint contributions.

China is ready to join the international community in a common effort to find the way out of the crisis in the Middle East and to achieve peace, stability and development at an early date.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are a number of speakers remaining on the list. With the consent of the Council, I therefore intend to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.25 p.m.